

Character and Design

VISION STATEMENT

Scottsdale residents and visitors value the diverse character and unique quality of design that our Sonoran Desert community offers. Scottsdale promotes a quality of development and redevelopment that is considered above the norm in terms of aesthetic composition and sustainable durability. Appropriate development in Scottsdale will strike a balance that respects the natural desert settings, historically significant sites and structure and the surrounding neighborhood context, with the objectives and needs of future generations. Art and aesthetic enhancement will continue to be essential components of our community's character and lifestyle.

Introduction

The 1994-96 City Shape 2020 citizen-driven process, concluded that there were two major determinants that make Scottsdale a good place and continue to make it a good place: “character” and “quality.” The citizens determined that these two factors have been a major influence on how the community has grown and will continue to grow and develop. They also said that our expectations for and appreciation of character and quality might be very different from one part of the city to another because our individual neighborhoods are unique in so many ways.

Our neighborhoods were built at different times, beginning in the early 1950's. They might contain simple, well-built homes within walking distance of Downtown Scottsdale, townhouses with a resort-like lifestyle or large homes with equestrian facilities and a desert setting. Each style is richly diverse in its own right, yet a part of the larger Scottsdale community form.

Valuing our physical diversity created the drive to re-evaluate our community's General Plan in a new light. Today we approach general planning at three levels: the overarching whole community, the character of specific areas, and the individual neighborhoods.

Design Standards

Scottsdale has a rich heritage of initiating quality design standards and review processes. Examples of this focus on character and design include a strong sign ordinance, the Development (design) Review process, parking lot landscaping, protected Natural Area Open Space (NAOS), the Indian Bend Wash greenbelt, Scenic Corridors, and the Environmentally Sensitive Lands

**see the General Plan
section**

Ordinance (ESLO), to name a few. Each represents unconventional and inspired solutions to community design issues.

The vision of Scottsdale's design and character strives for quality that is higher than the average or common place. Residents, visitors and neighbors consider Scottsdale as the "Jewel of the Valley" and have come to accept no less than appropriate "quality design" responses as our community develops. Scottsdale's roots of commitment to the arts and culture are an important contributor to this community's attitude. While this response may vary in appearance from character area to character area, the foundation of our vision of a quality community is based on good design.

Good design is a result of sensitively responding to the character of the surrounding natural and built settings as well as the multitude of excellent

regional, historical, cultural, and environmental resources to draw from. The beauty of our natural features including the desert, mountains, and washes provides a unique backdrop to the community. In addition, well designed neighborhoods, distinctive shopping areas and businesses, recreational and cultural facilities and public structures combine to make a community that is attractive, desirable, and memorable.

Various components of the community help to create and define place, identity and character. Development patterns, landmarks, drainage and multi-use corridors, travel patterns, edges, nodes, and other physical characteristics help to create distinctions and a sense of uniqueness for different areas within our community. Appropriately unique responses to these valued diverse environments ensure proper relationships to the variety of living, working and leisure opportunities that are fundamental to our community identity.

Community Character

The character of our community is complex and diverse. Each neighborhood setting holds an important image that when grouped together

complete Scottsdale's identity as single community. Urban, suburban, rural, and native Sonoran Desert characters provide a broad pallet of experiences and expressions each offering a unique opportunity for an elegant composition. It is the value of quality and the pride of the citizens that unify all of these rich expressions together as a community. It is the city's leadership responsibility

Density - An inherent concern or not?

High-density development generally is regarded as inherently inconsistent with Scottsdale's image and character. People often have strong reservations about development of higher density in the community. Yet, closer analysis of public opinion reveals that perception can be more critical than reality on this high-profile issue. Bulky buildings devoid of design features and landscaping are commonly rejected as unacceptable, but other high-density projects that incorporate innovative designs that blend with the surrounding landscapes generate favorable response. Thus, from a "character" perspective, the challenge is not so much to avoid high density as it is to ensure aesthetic appeal.

to oversee connections, transitions and blending of these characters to be sure that our community comes together to create a unified composition.

Development Review

Community oversight has been and continues to be an important part of our community's heritage, and one that did not occur by happenstance. Our community leaders have carefully scrutinized new development, redevelopment, and related activity for decades. This forward thinking has resulted in a quality community even with the explosive growth experienced in the recent past. Through commitment to quality, respectful pride in past creations, and an ongoing striving for excellence, our city has and will continue to create a community held in high regard locally, nationally, and even internationally.

Historic and Archeological Preservation

Although Scottsdale is a relatively young community it has recognized the significance of its historical and archeological past. A Historic Preservation Commission and Ordinance have been recently established. This Commission is charged with assuring that the legacy of Scottsdale is not lost in its growth and evolution. The amount of historic resources will increase greatly in the coming decades.

Arts and Culture

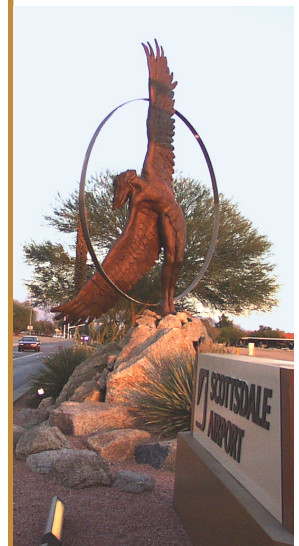
The arts are as integral to Scottsdale's character as is its Sonoran desert setting. In 1909, before a single Scottsdale street was paved, Marjorie Thomas built her art studio at what is now the intersection of Indian School Road and Drinkwater Boulevard. In the years that followed, Scottsdale was "discovered" time and time again by artists, poets and other creative individuals. The Scottsdale Visioning process recognized the importance of arts and culture to Scottsdale, making it one of the Four Dominant Themes that define Scottsdale's unique characteristics.

Scottsdale boasts more art galleries per capita than most major cities in the world. The more than 80 art galleries extending from Downtown to the northern reaches of the city have given Scottsdale an international reputation as a major art market, on par with New York, Los Angeles, and Santa Fe. Art dealers and collectors come from all over the world to shop at the local galleries. Additionally Scottsdale has recently begun to integrate public art into its urban fabric. It is appropriately fitting that a community known synonymously for art would choose art as a necessary component of its character and function.

Scottsdale has a strong tradition of public and private support for the arts. Since the city's incorporation in 1951, Scottsdale has gained a national reputation as an art center that includes public art, galleries, resident artists, and special events. The city has created a public art program to bring art into the daily lives of people that live in or visit Scottsdale.



**see Scottsdale's
Values and Vision
section**





Since 1968, the city has accepted donations to develop a city fine arts collection, beautify public spaces, and decorate city structures. The city has adopted a Percent for Art Ordinance that allows for the commissioning of specific art works for public spaces and establishes a cultural improvements program for the Downtown district. A second ordinance established the Fine Arts Trust Fund to be used for commissioning works of art. An additional funding source for the trust comes from one percent of the city's annual capital improvement project budget and these funds can be used citywide.

Public art includes artwork placed on and integrated into public property such as parks, streets, walkways, plazas, landscaped areas, building surfaces, or in public buildings. Civic artwork should be experienced from the street or other public accessible places. Artwork in public buildings should be accessible to the public as much as possible.

The city has contracted with the Scottsdale Cultural Council since 1988 to administer its collection of fine art and the public art program. The Cultural Council charged their Art Collections Advisory Board (ACAB) with managing the Public Art Program and with developing procedures and policies for the acquisition and placement of public art. The ACAB determines annual objectives through a Public Art Master Plan. Citizen involvement in the development of a citywide public art plan is ongoing.

Scottsdale Values ...

- The special characteristics of the Sonoran Desert setting, including climate, vegetation, and topography.
- The culture and history embodied in the desert Southwest region and its character and design implications.
- Quality design that incorporates concepts such as but not limited to context, aesthetics, craftsmanship, function, durability, and sustainability.
- Physical settings that enhance people's sense of place and comfort. Public and private spaces incorporated within and linked to adjacent developments that enable comfort, human scale, and social interaction.
- Diversity provided by the varying character of different areas within the city, while understanding the role of each in the composition of our community as a whole.

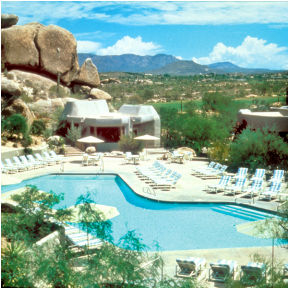
- Protection of significant historic buildings and settings.
- Art integrated into our community as an important component of good design.

Goals and Approaches

- 1. Determine the appropriateness of all development in terms of community goals, surrounding area character, and the specific context of the surrounding neighborhood.**
- Respond to regional and citywide contexts with new and revitalized development in terms of:
 - Scottsdale as a southwestern desert community.
 - Scottsdale as a part of a large metropolitan area with a unique reputation, image, character and identity within its regional setting.
 - Relationships to surrounding land forms, land uses and transportation corridors.
 - Contributions to city wide linkages of open space and activity zones.
 - Consistently high community quality expectations.
 - Physical scale relating to the human perception at different points of experience.
 - Visual impacts (views, lighting, etc.) upon public settings and neighboring properties.
 - Visual and accessibility connections and separations.
 - Public buildings and facilities that demonstrate these concepts and “lead” by example.
 - Enrich the lives of all Scottsdale citizens by promoting safe, attractive, and context compatible development.
 - Encourage projects that are responsive to the natural environment, site conditions, and unique character of each area, while being responsive to people’s needs.
 - Ensure that all development is a part of and contributes to the established or planned character of the area of the proposed location. Character can cross land uses and zoning to include community regions containing a mixture of housing, employment, cultural, educational, commercial, and recreational uses. The overall type of character type that these uses are a part of describes the pattern and intensity of how these uses fit together. The following general character types are found in our community: **Urban Character Types** contain higher-density residential, non-residential, and mixed-use neighborhoods. The districts include apartments, high-density townhouses, commercial and employment



see the Character Types map for character type location



centers, and resorts. Urban districts should have a pedestrian orientation with shade, activity nodes and small intimate developed open spaces that encourage interaction among people. Some examples of Urban Districts include:

- **The Downtown** is a highly functional mixed-use center, containing areas of different densities and architectural styles that emphasize regional and specialty retail, office and residential/hotel uses.
- **The Resort Corridor** consists of concentrations of major resort facilities along Scottsdale Road near Downtown. A variety of tourist accommodations, quality office, specialty retail, recreation uses including golf courses and tennis courts, employment, and compatible high amenity residential neighborhoods are all components.
- **Employment Cores** are primary employment centers for the city. These cores support a wide range of activities and regional and community level employment uses.
- **Freeway Corridor/Regional Core** will be a dense mixed-use employment core that includes a number of region-serving offices, retail, and hotel uses. This core will include more than a million square feet of regional and community retail centers. Employment along the freeway corridor will be second only to the Downtown District in intensity and positive impact on the City's economic development.

Suburban/Suburban Desert Character Types contain medium-density neighborhoods that include a variety of commercial and employment centers and resorts. A wide variety of recreational and leisure opportunities are integrated into the fabric of these districts. Pedestrian and bicycle linkages from neighborhood to neighborhood and from neighborhood to commercial, cultural, educational and recreational components are vital in weaving these areas into a livable community. The physical character of these districts varies widely throughout the community and is based on period of construction and the surrounding topography and natural features. These districts comprise most of the southern and central areas of the city. There are some special features within suburban character types that embody unique land uses or physical elements:

- **Activity Centers** include major mixed-use areas that are smaller than the employment cores, but larger than neighborhood centers.
- **The Tourism/Recreation Areas** are major open space and recreational amenities located at the Central Arizona Project corridor. Facilities include the TPC golf courses, Princess Hotel, Westworld Equestrian Park, and Taliesin West. Sensitivity to surrounding neighborhoods is encouraged.
- **Resort Villages** are concentrations of major resort facilities. A variety of tourist accommodations, quality office, specialty retail,

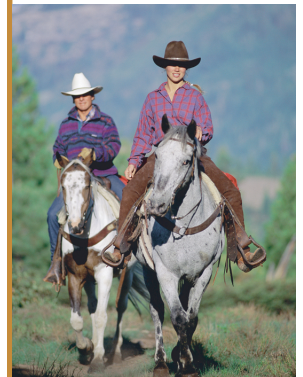
recreation uses including golf courses and tennis courts, employment, and compatible high amenity residential neighborhoods are all components.

Rural/Rural Desert Character Types contain relatively low-density and large lot development, including horse privilege neighborhoods and low-density resorts as well as areas with particularly sensitive and unique natural environments. These districts provide a rural lifestyle that includes preservation of the desert character. The identity and natural desert character of this district should be strengthened and maintained by preventing encroachment of nonconforming uses and architectural styles, protecting open spaces and vistas, encouraging conservation of desert vegetation, building low profile structures, discouraging walls, and limiting road access. Special care should be taken to preserve the natural character of the land and natural drainage corridors. Desert vegetation is maintained in either in common open-space areas or on individual lots. The impacts of development on desert preservation should be minimized through clustering, preserving washes, and the use of natural buffers on the perimeter of developments. Site plans for developments on larger vacant tracts should be sensitive to topography, vegetation and natural drainage area.

Environmentally Sensitive Lands and Native Desert Character Types

These districts include areas defined by the Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance (ESLO) overlay-zoning district. Most of these rugged areas should ultimately be preserved as natural open space, and all areas will follow the regulations of ESLO. The McDowell Sonoran Preserve is located in these areas.

- **Desert Districts** include areas of all character districts with the identifying title “Desert.” They include areas with significant environmental amenities or hazards. Special care should be taken to minimize the impacts of development in these districts. Any development in these districts will follow the ESLO guidelines.
- **Mountain Districts** include the McDowell and Continental Mountains and the mountainous regions of north Scottsdale. This area is characterized by steep mountainsides, boulder features, mountain peaks and ridges, and incised washes. Development regulations should offer incentives to preserve land in these districts and to transfer any allowable density to adjacent land containing few environmental constraints. Any development permitted in this district should be very low density and special care should be taken to minimize the impacts of development on the natural character of the land. Low impact recreational opportunities may be considered for these areas, including hiking, mountain biking and equestrian trails.



see the Character
Areas map for
character area
locations

- **McDowell Sonoran Preserve** consists of mountain and desert land included in the city's Preserve. This land generally possesses outstanding scenic value; valuable wildlife habitat and migration routes; lush desert vegetation; significant environmental conditions such as sensitive washes, riparian areas, and mountain peaks and valleys; archaeological and historic sites; and opportunities for appropriate passive recreation in designated areas. Preserve land will remain as permanent open space with limited permanent improvements. The recommended study boundary of the McDowell Sonoran Preserve includes mountain and desert land designated by the City Council as suitable for preservation.

- Continue to develop and refine Character Areas and Character Area Plans.

Character Areas are sets of neighborhoods that share the same overall character type (described above) and often have other unifying elements that distinguish the area. There is often more than one Character Area in a general character district or a character district category. For example: Both the Desert Foothills and the Dynamite Foothills Character Areas are Rural Desert Character Types, though located in different places in the city.

Character Area Plans will be developed on a priority basis over a period of time, based on City Council direction, potential for change and the desire of residents. Each plan will speak specifically to the goals and

special attributes of an identifiable and functional character area i.e., its land uses, infrastructure, broadly defined urban architectural design philosophy, and transitions. Character Plans should ensure that quality of development and consistency of character drive Scottsdale's General Plan at a Character Plan level, all within the context of community-wide goals. An additional strength of the Character Plan approach is its ability to address "edges," those places where two character areas meet or places where Scottsdale's boundaries abut other governmental jurisdictions. Character Area Planning will pursue the involvement and participation of an area's residents and property owners in the planning and implementation process.



- Develop and refine Neighborhood Planning and Neighborhood Plans. Because the health and vitality of a neighborhood is dependent on its ability to adapt to the future, steps need to be taken to address changes

that will take place in the neighborhood. Neighborhood plans will identify and implement efforts to improve specific neighborhoods within the city. Every neighborhood has different needs, issues, constraints, and opportunities. A Neighborhood Plan might broadly define a neighborhood's goals together with an action plan, issues brief, or other policy and implementation tools. The planning process must have the in-depth involvement of the people who live and work in that neighborhood.

2. **Review the design of all development proposals to foster quality design that enhances Scottsdale as a unique southwestern desert community. (*The City Charter excludes review of detached single family residential*)**
 - Continue the development review process. The Development Review Board currently reviews all proposed new and revitalized development, other than single-family residential, in terms of appropriate contextual character, quality of design, and site planning.
 - Recognize that Scottsdale's economic and environmental well-being depends a great deal upon the distinctive character and natural attractiveness of the community, which are based in part on good site planning and aesthetics in the design and development review process. These characteristics contribute substantially to the community's potential as a recreational resort area and regional trade center.
 - Use the design and development review process to enrich the lives of all Scottsdale residents and visitors by promoting safe, attractive, and context compatible development.
 - Promote, develop, and adopt comprehensive policies and guidelines for use in the design and development review process, which establish principles and standards for public and private development and recognize the diverse scope of development projects in the community. These should include, but are not limited to, design guidelines for Character Districts, Character Areas, special districts, visually important roadways, open spaces, public and private infrastructure, specific building types, and interaction with our Sonoran Desert.
 - Promote development that respects and enhances the unique climate, topography, vegetation and historical context of Scottsdale's Sonoran Desert environment, all of which are considered amenities that help sustain our community and its quality of life.
 - Promote, evaluate and maintain the Scottsdale Sensitive Design Principles that when followed will help improve and reinforce the quality of design in our community.



**see Scottsdale
Sensitive Design
Principles in
Appendices**

**see the Goals of the
Historic
Preservation
Commission in
Appendices**



**see the Streetscape
map for Streetscape
classification area
locations**

3. **Identify Scottsdale's historic, archaeological and cultural resources, promote an awareness of them for future generations, and support their preservation and conservation.**
 - Continue the Historic and Archaeological Preservation Process. The Historic Preservation Commission advises the Planning Commission and City Council in all matters concerning historic and archaeological preservation.
 - Enforce and refine the city's Historic Preservation Ordinance and the Archaeological Resource Preservation Ordinance to protect our significant resources and mitigate unavoidable loss.
 - Continue the process of identifying Scottsdale's historic, archaeological, and cultural resources.
 - Provide a variety of support and incentives to enhance and maintain significant historic and archaeological resources.
 - Establish standards required to preserve and retain the historic character of designated resources.
 - Promote revitalization of identified significant current or future historic resources through preservation, adaptive reuse or other means as an alternative to wholesale redevelopment.
 - Initiate programs for the preservation, restoration or rehabilitation of City-owned historically significant structures and resources.
 - Advocate programs for the restoration and rehabilitation of privately owned significant structures and resources.
 - Discourage and work to prevent unwanted demolition of buildings and structures identified by the Commission as significant and work to prevent the destruction of significant archaeological resources.
 - Develop partnerships with groups such as the Scottsdale Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, and other local, regional, and national historic and archaeological boards and commissions in support of these goals.
 - Promote the Historical and Archaeological Preservation programs within the community through education and public outreach.
4. **Encourage "streetscapes" for major roadways that promote the city's visual quality and character, and blend into the character of the surrounding area.**

Streetscape is a term used to describe the combination of individual design elements that give character to the street frontages of the city. Some examples of these elements are landscaping, street furniture, lighting, and sidewalk design. Streetscape design plays a major role in setting a standard of quality and innovation for other design issues.

- Create specific design guidelines for highly visible major city streets.
- Design **Downtown/Urban** areas to concentrate on those elements that will provide pedestrian comfort, such as arcade-covered walkways, shade, decorative paving, and landscaping, so that a comfortable setting can be created for this use-intensive area.
- Achieve compatibility between pedestrians and transportation routes in the **Suburban** areas of the city. Use of trees that are native and/or desert adapted and achieve a dense, broad canopy is encouraged for the main theme of this streetscape type. Separation of pedestrians from traffic flow can be realized through the use of landscape areas and consideration of sidewalk alignment.
- Apply the **Transitional** classification to areas of the city where the development pattern is medium to low, and the streetscape serves as a buffer between traffic and adjacent land uses. Include native plants or plants compatible with a desert environment in the Transitional area's landscape materials. Special care should be given to the protection of existing vegetation and natural features that can be incorporated into the design.
- Ensure compatibility with the natural desert in **Natural** streetscape areas. Plant selection should be those that are native to the desert and densities of planting areas should be similar to natural conditions.
- Blend different streetscape categories where they join to prevent a marked difference between opposing sides of streets.
- Apply streetscape guidelines to all landscaped areas within the public right-of-way. Encourage the use of streetscape guidelines in areas between the right-of-way and building setback lines or perimeter walls.
- Designate specific design standards to be implemented on select streets where a special theme is desired.
- Apply the **Scenic Corridor** designation in circumstances where a substantial landscape buffer is desired to maintain views, the desert character is a vital part of the neighborhood setting, and buffering of roadway impacts is important. This allows for a larger landscaped area that can minimize the impact of highly traveled roads adjacent to neighborhoods. Establish specific Scenic Corridor guidelines and policies for the design and maintenance of these visually significant roadways.
- Other visually significant roadways include roadways with buffered setbacks and roadways with specific streetscape design themes. Each of these designated roadways have individual design guideline policies.
- Form and implement policies to guide landscape maintenance in the public right-of-ways and easements in a manner consistent with the desired streetscape character.
- Retain mature trees in public right-of-ways to preserve shade and the character of the street.
- Use markers and entry features at key entrances to Scottsdale so that residents and visitors have a sense of arrival into the city.

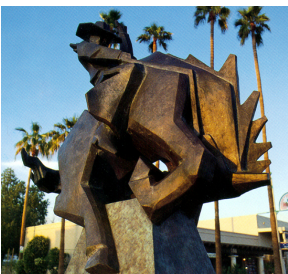


see Shea Boulevard,
Via Linda, and Frank
Lloyd Wright
Boulevard
Streetscape Design
Guidelines

- Make sure streetlights are consistent with the intensity of adjacent land uses and the image of Scottsdale. In some areas of the city, special streetlight design should be used to enhance the unique character of the streetscape.
- Place streetlights at intervals and locations to enhance safety.
- Keep street lighting to a minimum in low-density areas, rural areas, and areas near the McDowell Sonoran Preserve, and shield the light fixtures to maintain a dark sky.

5. Build upon the significant role the arts have played in shaping our community's image and lifestyle by maximizing the potential of public art to enrich the daily lives of people that live in or visit Scottsdale.

- Inform citizens and visitors of the role art plays in the past, present, and future identity of Scottsdale.
- Express Scottsdale's unique heritage, culture, and environment through private and public art.
- Use art as a catalyst to foster civic pride and identity in both public and private improvements.
- Increase the public's knowledge and sensitivity to artistic influences and aesthetic aspects of Scottsdale's man-made and natural environment.
- Emphasize art that promotes public education and stimulates dialogue and interaction within the community.
- Create and maintain a Public Art Master Plan through a partnership with the Scottsdale Cultural Council. The Public Art Master Plan should maximize the role of all forms of public art in the beautification of the city and integrate art into the surrounding context.
- Include art as an integral part of public infrastructure design, including but not limited to civic buildings, streetscapes, parks, and civil structures (i.e. bridges, water reservoirs, drainage structures, etc.).
- Introduce and integrate public art at various scales into the built environment. (for example; art as monumental urban expressions or pedestrian level art details.)
- Consider establishing art districts that celebrate the city tradition of art and provide amenities for residents and visitors.
- Maximize the potential of art and cultural events for stimulating economic growth.
- Encourage private participation in public art through the donation of artwork to the city and the placement of artwork on private property that can be publicly viewed.
- Celebrate the dominant life style or character of an area of the city by using art.



6. Recognize the value and visual significance that landscaping has upon the character of the community and maintain standards that result in substantial, mature landscaping that reinforces the character of the city.

- Require substantial landscaping be provided as part of new development or redevelopment.
- Maintain the landscaping materials and pattern within a character area.
- Encourage the use of landscaping to reduce the effects of heat and glare on buildings and pedestrian areas as well as contribute toward better air quality.
- Discourage plant materials that contribute substantial air-borne pollen.
- Encourage landscape designs that promote water conservation, safe public settings, erosion protection, and reduce the “urban heat island” effect.
- Encourage the retention of mature landscape plant materials.



7. Encourage sensitive outdoor lighting that reflects the needs and character of different parts of the city.

- Establish lighting standards that relate to the ambient lighting designations contained within the 2000 I.E.S. standards revisions.
- Encourage lighting designs that minimize glare and lighting intrusions into neighborhood settings.
- Encourage creative and high quality designs for outdoor lighting fixtures and standards that reflect the character of the local context.
- Discourage lighting that reduces the viability of astronomical observation facilities within Arizona.
- Allow for lighting systems that support active pedestrian uses and contribute to public safety.

Related Plans and Policies:

- Open Space Plan
- Great Sonoran Desert Design Principles
- Environmentally Sensitive Lands Ordinance Design Guidelines
- Scottsdale Sensitive Design Principles
- Design Guidelines (for various building types - ongoing)
- Scenic Corridor Policy
- Frank Lloyd Wright Streetscape Design Guidelines
- Via Linda Streetscape Design Guidelines
- Shea Boulevard Streetscape Design Guidelines
- Downtown Design Guidelines
- Public Art Master Plan
- Historic Preservation Ordinance
- Character Area Planning Summaries
- Dynamite Foothills Character Area Plan (2000)
- Desert Foothills Character Area Plan (1999)

Element Graphics:

- Character Types map
- Character Areas map
- Streetscapes map

